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May 24, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

The National Cotton Council (NCC) is writing to convey our support of strong domestic procurement policies for personal protective equipment (PPE) in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA). We believe that PPE procurement rules substantially like the Berry Amendment should be extended to cover the federal government's largest buyers of these products, including the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services.

NCC membership includes cotton growers, ginnings, cottonseed processors and merchandizers, merchants, cooperatives, warehouses, and textile manufacturers. While a majority of the industry is concentrated in 17 cotton-producing states, the downstream manufacturers of cotton apparel and home furnishings are located in virtually every state. Farms and businesses directly involved in the production, distribution and processing of cotton employ more than 125,000 workers and produce direct business revenue of more than \$21 billion. The United States has a significant and abundant cotton supply chain that responded to the PPE shortage and supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. textile manufacturers produced over a billion PPE items such as face masks, gowns, and testing kit swabs for healthcare and frontline workers, as well as the American people. In doing so, these manufacturers began a process of re-shoring and near-shoring the production of critical products. However, these efforts cannot thrive without long-term government contracts that provide the ability for the necessary investments.

It is imperative that USICA include the necessary provisions to support private sector investment in PPE manufacturing and support the growth of our public health manufacturing base. Doing so will provide benefits from textile manufacturers through the supply chain to cotton growers. Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Fountain".

Kent Fountain
Chairman
National Cotton Council